

**ROSS TOWNSHIP
JOINT
TOWNSHIP BOARD/PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
May 20, 2019**

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE

Supervisor Baker and Chairperson Lauderdale called the joint meeting of the Ross Township Board and Planning Commission to order at 6:30 p.m. at the Ross Township Hall.

ROLL CALL

Township Board:

Present: Supervisor, Rob Baker
Clerk, Norm Kellogg
Treasurer, Syndee Genung
Trustee, Lynn Harmon
Trustee, Diana Langshaw
Trustee, Dave Senkewitz
Trustee, Mike Sulka

Absent: None

Planning Commission:

Present: Chairperson, Jim Lauderdale
Mike Bekes
Mark Markillie
Michael Moore
Pam Sager
Sherri Snyder

Absent: None

Also Present: ZBA Chairperson, Dave Carpenter
ZBA Member, Jim DeKruyter
ZBA Alternate, Jim Gilbert
Kelly Largent, AGS – Township Zoning Administrator
Bert Gale, AGS – Township Zoning Administrator
Rebecca Harvey – Township Planning Consultant

Supervisor Baker then requested that Chairperson Lauderdale chair the joint meeting of the boards; there was no objection.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was noted that Public Comment would be added to the agenda following Approval of the Agenda. Sulka moved to approve the agenda as amended. Langshaw seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was offered.

INTRODUCTIONS

Brief introductions were provided by all members in attendance.

BOARD ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES

Chairperson Lauderdale noted the presence of new members to both boards and requested an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the Township's planning and zoning bodies by Township Planning Consultant, Rebecca Harvey.

Harvey highlighted the powers, functions and responsibilities of the Township Board, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and Administrative Staff related to planning and zoning in the Township. She explained the importance of coordination between the bodies and the elements of defensible decision-making.

Lengthy discussion followed with specific focus on recent ZBA activity and questions related to relevant variance criteria; the recently adopted sliding-scale approach to setbacks on nonconforming lots; and, the use of the special land use process in considering accessory building proposals and nonconforming use/building proposals.

PLANNING COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

Chairperson Lauderdale explained the statutory basis for the Planning Commission Annual Report and the use of the Report in the development of the Work Plan each year. He provided an overview of the recently approved 2018-2019 Annual Report and 2019-2020 Work Plan. The following was noted:

- Township Master Plan: the 2002 Master Plan was reviewed in 2007 and accepted with no changes; the Plan was reviewed again in 2011 and Sections VI and VII were amended (Lauderdale provided documentation that said amendments are reflected in the Master Plan that is available on the website but that the Title page was not amended accordingly. He requested that the Title page be amended to state "Amended through November 2011"; there was no objection); the Plan was most recently reviewed in 2017 and a proposal approved for a minor update of the Plan so as to incorporate important changes that have occurred both in the Township and in planning/zoning laws/concepts. In approval of the minor update, it was noted that a major update would be considered after the 2020 Census is available and would include key public engagement efforts.

Harmon questioned if it makes more sense to delay the proposed minor update to the Plan and simply wait and do the planned major update in 2022 as a way of saving money. It was noted that the minor update was initiated earlier in the year and is approximately 2/3 complete. Reference was made to the update proposal and the approved project cost. It was agreed that the update should be completed as approved.

- Harmon inquired whether the approved budget for the Master Plan and the general Planning Commission budget were sufficient to support the Work Plan. She noted a need for the Township to monitor and review the expenses/budget quarterly. It was agreed that the Township would seek to provide a quarterly report to the Planning Commission in keeping with this objective. Sulka stated he would plan to provide the 1st quarter report (through June) to the Planning Commission at the July meeting.
- Text Amendments – Sections 18.4 D. and 19.3: the proposed amendments are intended to simplify the site plan content requirements for accessory building proposals and to clarify/collapse the special land use criteria currently set forth in the Ordinance. It was noted that the proposed amendments have been discussed/accepted and are pending a public hearing.

General discussion ensued regarding the most helpful and efficient way for Planning Commission recommendations to be presented to the Township Board. Discussion elements included public hearing costs; options for Township Board action on Planning Commission recommendations; and, appropriate avenues for board members to stay informed and/or provide input.

- Draft RC/RT District: the proposed amendment is representative of the Planning Commission's goal to be proactive on land use issues. The proposed district does not introduce any new uses to the Township but creates a less cumbersome mechanism to achieve mixed use while giving the Township more design control.
- Sign Ordinance: clarification of the Supreme Court decision requiring content-neutral sign regulations was provided. In response to questions, Harvey

referenced those elements of the sign ordinance that require amendment. It was noted that the matter had been on hold pending receipt of an expected ‘model sign ordinance’, however, it was recently discovered the ordinance is no longer slated for release. To that end, it was agreed that the draft sign regulations prepared by Harvey in 2018 will be redistributed for review.

- Supervisor Baker stated that the ‘keeping of chickens’ is anticipated to be an upcoming issue in the Township and the Planning Commission may want to consider adding it to the Work Plan.
- Lauderdale presented a document prepared by Attorney Kaufman for Michigan Townships Association (MTA) discussing solar and/or wind energy facilities. She notes that said facilities can often be controversial but are important for local units of government to address at this time given the State of Michigan’s decree that current levels of fossil fuel generated energy must be reduced in the coming years. DeKruyter stated he has personally been approached by several companies from out-of-state to build a solar farm on his property. Lauderdale recommended the PC begin to address; there was no objection.

MEMBERS, CONSULTANTS, ADVISORS

All members expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet and to have productive conversation about process, communication and issues of interest in the Township.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rebecca Harvey, AICP, PCP
Township Planning Consultant